

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SINGAP 03507 01 OF 02 220650Z

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 INR-05

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R 220529Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5802
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 3507

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SN, VN, ASEAN
SUBJ: GOS-SRV RELATIONS

REF: SINGAPORE 3450

SUMMARY: SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW MADE IT PLAIN
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SECRET

PAGE 02 SINGAP 03507 01 OF 02 220650Z

TO SRV DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN THAT ESTABLISHMENT

OF GOS-SRV DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WAS NOT A SURE THING BUT WOULD DEPEND ON SRV NON-INTERFERENCE IN SINGAPORE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. PM LEE INDICATED THAT SINGAPORE WOULD BE MONITORING HANOI RADIO BROADCASTS TO ASSURE ITSELF THAT SRV BEHAVIOR REMAINED CORRECT. HE ALSO SAID THAT SINGAPORE WOULD REGARD SRV CRITICISM OF OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES AS UNFRIENDLY ACTS. PHAN HIEN "TOOK NOTE" OF THESE POSITIONS. A SRV DELEGATION WILL VISIT SINGAPORE BETWEEN END OF AUGUST AND DECEMBER TO DISCUSS ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC TIES AND EXPANSION OF SINGAPORE-SRV TRADE (PHAN HIEN DELEGATION BROUGHT A "SHOPPING LIST" WITH IT). PHAN HIEN NOTED THAT "A CERTAIN OUTSIDE POWER" HAD ASKED FOR NAVAL FACILITIES AT CAM RANH BAY, BUT REQUEST HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN. THE SINGAPOREANS CONSIDER THAT HANOI WISHES TO PLAY DOWN ITS POTENTIAL THREAT TO THE ASEAN COUNTRIES "FOR A WHILE", PERHAPS BECAUSE OF HIGH PRIORITY ATTACHED TO ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION, BUT THAT SRV RETAINS BROADER OBJECTIVES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA REGARDING WHICH SINGAPORE WILL MAINTAIN VIGILANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING ONE-HOUR TOUR D'HORISON WITH GOS FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM JULY 21, I RECEIVED FOLLOWING EXPOSITION FROM HIM CONCERNING VISIT TO SINGAPORE OF SRV DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN AND CURRENT STATE OF GOS-SRV RELATIONS:

2. FOLLOWING ITS EASY SUCCESSES IN PHILIPPINES AND MALAYSIA, THE SRV DELEGATION HEADED BY PHAN HIEN HAD ARRIVED IN SINGAPORE THINKING THAT LATTER WOULD BE A PUSH-OVER AND THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF GOS-SRV DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WOULD BE MERELY A PRO FORMA PROCEDURE. PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW, IN WHAT RAJARATNAM DESCRIBED AS FRANK AND "EVEN BRUTAL" DISCUSSION, MADE VIETNAMESE UNDERSTAND THAT SUCH WOULD NOT BE THE CASE. PM LEE EMPHASIZED THAT IN SAME WAY SINGAPORE ACCEPTED SRV AS A COMMUNIST STATE, SRV HAD TO UNDERSTAND THAT SINGAPORE WAS ANTI-COMMUNIST STATE, LED BY ELECTED GOVERNMENT DEDICATED TO RESIST COMMUNISM. ANYTHING WHICH SRV ATTEMPTED TO DO IN SINGAPORE TO ADVANCE THE COMMUNIST CAUSE WOULD BE REGARDED AS AN UNFRIENDLY ACT. WHEN PHAN HIEN TOOK POSITION THAT SRV WOULD NOT INTERFERE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER STATE, PM LEE LAID ON TABLE RADIO MONITORING REPORT OF STATEMENT BY SRV PM MADE DURING VERY PERIOD OF PHAN HIEN TOUR TO EFFECT THAT SRV SUPPORTED STRUGGLES OF SOUTHEAST

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SECRET

PAGE 03 SINGAP 03507 01 OF 02 220650Z

ASIAN PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE "GENUINE INDEPENDENCE" AND "GENUINE PROGRESS". THIS, LEE DECLARED, IMPLIED THAT SINGAPORE'S INDEPENDENCE WAS NOT GENUINE AND HENCE CONSTITUTED INTERFERENCE IN SINGAPORE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

3. PHAN HIEN CLAIMED THAT SRV PM'S WORDS HAD BEEN MISINTERPRETED, AND CITED THE "FOUR PRINCIPLES" AS EVIDENCE OF SRV'S BASIC POLICY ON RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. LEE STATED THAT IF RELATIONS

BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE TO LAST THEY SHOULD BE BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING; HENCE SINGAPORE WOULD BE WATCHING ITS RADIO MONITORING REPORTS TO SEE IF ANY REPETITIONS OF SRV LINE JUST CITED WOULD OCCUR. PHAN HIEN "TOOK NOTE" OF THIS POSITION.

4. PM LEE ALSO TOLD PHAN HIEN THAT SINGAPORE WAS ASEAN MEMBER, AND WHILE IT MIGHT OCCASIONALLY HAVE SOME POLICY DIFFERENCES WITH ITS ASEAN PARTNERS IT NEVERTHELESS WOULD BE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THEM AND WOULD REGARD SRV CRITICISMS OF ASEAN STATES AS UNFRIENDLY ACTS. PHAN HIEN NOTED THAT WHILE SRV HAD EARLIER BEEN CRITICAL OF ASEAN FOR HAVING MILITARY PURPOSE AND BEING UNDER FOREIGN DOMINATION, THIS WAS ON GROUNDS THAT THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE VIETNAM WAR ON THE US SIDE AND SRV ACCORDINGLY RETAINED SUSPICIONS REGARDING THESE TWO COUNTRIES (HE INDICATED THAT SRV HAD NO PROBLEMS WITH MALAYSIA, INDONESIA, AND SINGAPORE -- DESPITE "CERTAIN STATEMENTS" DURING VIETNAM WAR BY LEE KUAN YEW -- BECAUSE THESE THREE COUNTRIES HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN THE ATTACKS ON VIETNAM). HOW, HOWEVER, SRV HAD ACCEPTED THE EXPLANATIONS IT HAD RECEIVED AND NO LONGER LOOKED ON ASEAN AS EITHER A MILITARY PACT UNDER FOREIGN DOMINATION OR HOSTILE TO THE SRV. IN THE CONTEXT OF ASEAN PM LEE MENTIONED THAT SRV'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE ORGANIZATION COULD IN FACT BRING ABOUT VERY FEATURE WHICH IT FEARED -- IF SRV PERSISTED IN STRONGLY CRITICIZING ASEAN STATES, THEY WOULD INEVITABLY TURN TOWARD "A FRIENDLY SUPERPOWER" FOR SUPPORT. IF SRV IN TURN CALLED FOR THE SUPPORT OF ANOTHER SUPERPOWER, A DANGEROUS SITUATION COULD ARISE.

5. I ASKED RAJARATNAM IF CONTRADICTION BETWEEN SRV POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES ON A STATE-TO-STATE BASIS WHILE STILL SUPPORTING WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION HAD BEEN DISCUSSED, AND HE REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY. PM LEE HAD REMINDED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 SINGAP 03507 01 OF 02 220650Z

PHAN HIEN THAT THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT WAS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLES ACTION PARTY AND HENCE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY WERE SYNONYMOUS; HE ASSUMED SAME WAS TRUE IN VIETNAM. PHAN HIEN ALSO "TOOK NOTE" OF THIS POSITION.

6. GIVEN LEE KUAN YEW'S RESERVED APPROACH ON ESTABLISHMENT OF GOS-SRV DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, IT WAS AGREED BETWEEN SINGAPOREANS AND VIETNAMESE THAT A DELEGATION WOULD COME TO SINGAPORE SOMETIME DURING THE LAST PART OF 1976 TO DISCUSS ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC AND TRADE TIES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. RAJARATNAM SAID THAT THIS DELEGATION WOULD CERTAINLY NOT COME BEFORE THE END OF AUGUST, SINCE HE AND PM LEE WOULD BOTH BE ATTENDING COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT, AND THUS NO FIRM DATE HAD BEEN FIXED. ALL HE COULD SAY WAS THAT DELEGATION WOULD ARRIVE BETWEEN AUGUST AND DECEMBER.

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 03507 02 OF 02 220710Z

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INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 INR-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 IO-03 SAJ-01 SAM-01 EB-03 TRSE-00

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R 220529Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5803

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 3507

LIMDIS

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7. ON SUBJECT OF TRADE, RAJARATNAM REMARKED THAT VIETNAMESE APPEARED ANXIOUS TO DO BUSINESS WITH SINGAPORE AND IN FACT ARRIVED WITH LONG SHOPPING LIST. THEY WERE INTERESTED IN BUYING TRACTORS, HARVESTERS, TRUCKS, AND OIL RIGS FROM SINGAPORE -- IN EACH CASE, PRODUCTS OF SINGAPORE'S MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS (HE FELT THAT SRV ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THESE MULTINATIONALS MIGHT PROVIDE A CHANNEL FOR INDIRECT TRADE WITH THE U.S.,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SINGAP 03507 02 OF 02 220710Z

EVEN IF DIRECT TRADE WAS NOT NOW POSSIBLE). IN ADDITION, PHAN HIEN STATED THAT SRV HOPED TO LEARN FROM SINGAPORE IN FIELDS OF SHIPPING, PUBLIC HOUSING, AND INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT. IN RETURN, VIETNAM COULD EXPORT PRODUCTS SUCH AS COAL, RICE, AND TIMBER TO SINGAPORE. RAJARATNAM HAD IMPRESSION THAT VIETNAMESE WERE, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, GENUINELY INTERESTED IN ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AS A MATTER OF FIRST PRIORITY, AND THAT DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COULD VERY WELL TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER BROADER IDEOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR A WHILE YET, EVEN THOUGH THESE BROADER OBJECTIVES WOULD STILL REMAIN. APROPOS OF VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC SITUATION, PHAN HIEN SPOKE ON THE PROBLEMS OF REINTEGRATING 400,000 PROSTITUTES IN THE SOUTH INTO THE VIETNAMESE ECONOMY AND ALSO THE DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING JOBS FOR VERY LARGE NUMBERS OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO EITHER HAD NO INCLINATION TO WORK OR HAD NO PARTICULAR OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING.

8. PHAN HIEN HAD MENTIONED TO MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS K.C. LEE ONE ITEM INVOLVING SRV-SOVIET RELATIONS: HE REPORTED THAT "A CERTAIN OUTSIDE POWER" HAD ASKED FOR NAVAL FACILITIES AT CAM RANH BAY. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE VIETNAMESE HAD NOT FOUGHT 30 YEARS FOR THEIR INDEPENDENCE ONLY TO HAND OVER SOME OF THEIR TERRITORY TO ONE OF THE SUPERPOWERS. RAJARATNAM INTERPRETED THESE REMARKS TO INDICATE THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE PUTTING IT ON RECORD THAT THEY WERE NOT SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOVIET UNION. HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE BEING CAREFUL NOT TO OFFEND THE CHINESE BY ALLOWING THE USSR TO SET UP AN ADVANCE BASE NEAR CHINA.

9. RAJARATNAM NOTED THAT DESPITE LEE KUAN YEW'S TOUGH LINE REGARDING GOS-SRV RELATIONS, PHAN HIEN HAD NOT BEEN PUT OFF BUT ON THE CONTRARY HAD EXPRESSED SATISFACTION OVER BEING ABLE TO ENGAGE IN A GENUINELY FRANK DISCUSSION, AND TO HEAR WHAT AN ASEAN LEADER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES. THIS HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE IN MANILA AND KUALA LUMPUR, WHERE THE RESPECTIVE LEADERS HAD BEEN SO ANXIOUS TO PLEASE THAT THEIR REMARKS HAD BEEN CONFINED LARGELY TO EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP.

10. AT SEVERAL POINTS DURING THE CONVERSATION RAJARATNAM OBSERVED THAT THE GOS WAS UNHAPPY OVER WAY THAT THE THAI SEEMED TO BE GIVING IN TO HANOI. THE GOS HAD ADVISED THE THAI TO BE MORE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SINGAP 03507 02 OF 02 220710Z

FIRM, SINCE SRV NEEDED THAILAND MORE THAN THAILAND NEEDED THE

SRV. HOWEVER, SINGAPORE'S ADVICE HAD NOT BEEN HEEDDED. RAJARATNAM ALSO SAID THAT THE GOS HAD SENT TO JAKARTA A REPORT OF ITS EXPERIENCES WITH THE PHAN HIEN MISSION SO THAT THE INDONESIANS MIGHT KNOW IN ADVANCE SOME OF THE ISSUES RAISED AND MAKE THEIR PREPARATIONS ACCORDINGLY.

11. IN COMMENTING ON WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED DURING THE SINGAPORE VISIT OF THE PHAN HIEN GROUP, RAJARATNAM INDICATED THAT SINGAPORE BELIEVED THE VIETNAMESE FOR SOME REASON OR ANOTHER APPEARED TO WANT TO PLAY DOWN THEIR POTENTIAL THREAT TO THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, AT LEAST, AS ALREADY NOTED, FOR A WHILE. IN ADDITION TO THE ECONOMIC REASONS MENTIONED ABOVE, RAJARATNAM FELT THAT THE SOFTER SRV STANCE MIGHT HAVE SOME CONNECTION WITH HANOI'S PLANS TO ATTEND THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT. BY TONING DOWN THEIR PREVIOUS HARD LINE TOWARD THEIR SOUTHEAST ASIAN NEIGHBORS, THE VIETNAMESE COULD EXPECT TO GAIN APPROVAL OF NON-ALIGNED STATES WHICH HITHERTO HAD BEEN SUPPORTERS OF THE PRG AND WHO MIGHT NOW BE RATHER PUT OFF BY THE WAY THAT THE PRESENT SRV GOVERNMENT HAS PRACTICALLY NO IMPORTANT FIGURES FROM SOUTH VIETNAM (RAJARATNAM MENTIONED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT MADAME BINH IS NOW ONLY MINISTER OF EDUCATION).

12. COMMENT: RAJARATNAM'S REMARKS CONFIRM ESTIMATE CONTAINED REFTEL THAT SINGAPORE INTENDS TO PROCEED VERY CAUTIOUSLY IN ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH HANOI AND WILL PREDICATE ITS ACTIONS ON SRV BEHAVIOS. ALSO AS NOTED IN REFTEL, SINGAPORE WILL KEEP ITS GUARD UP, AND WHILE IT WILL ATTEMPT TO GAIN WHATEVER ECONOMIC BENEFITS WHICH MAY ACCRUE FROM HANOI'S CURRENTLY MORE RELAXED APPROACH, IT WILL NOT ALLOW ITSELF TO BE LULLED INTO THINKING THAT HANOI NO LONGER WISHES TO ESTABLISH A MUCH BROADER ROLE FOR ITSELF IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HOLDRIDGE

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